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ABSTRACT

The Library Directors of Santa Clara County in July, 1972, organized the Cooperative Information Network (CIN), funded under the Library Services and Construction Act. The present CIN covers only information and reference services. CIN is composed of 83 libraries of six types: public, school, commercial organization, junior college, university, and non-commercial special. It is governed by a board of directors, composed of the County Librarian and six elected members, one from each type of library. The main expense involved so far has been the installation of TWX machines in 12 question referral centers. CIN's great advantage over other local library networks, is that it joins different types of libraries into one system, providing a large and varied pool of information to all members. Yet the differing structures of member libraries has also posed problems which must be worked out if CIN is to succeed. It seems that an information and reference service is a feasible beginning to total library cooperation. (Author/SL)

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The Cooperative Information Network

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"I think we must consider new ways to build a great network for knowledge - not just a broadcast system, but one that employs every means of sending and storing information that the individual can use."

President Lyndon B. Johnson
November 7, 1967 ¹

If it was once possible for a single library to be self-sufficient, supplying materials for all of the needs of its users, it is not true any longer. Santa Clara County librarians, acutely aware of this current "information explosion" have formed CIN, the Cooperative Information Network. Many other libraries have done the same and formed networks encouraged and funded by the state and federal government. The federal Library Services and Construction Act in its Title III promotes inter-library cooperation by providing grants for "the establishment and operation of systems or networks of libraries, including state, school, college and university, public and special libraries, and special information centers working together to achieve maximum effective use of funds in providing services to all library users." ² In the area of education both the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act have provisions for cooperative programs. The California Library Network, a Master Plan calls for increasing local cooperation as a step toward a total state network.

California has several innovative library networks. One of the most famous is the Bay Area Reference Center (BARC) in San Francisco. ³ BARC was formed in 1967 as a final answering place for Bay Area reference questions. BARC is a reference center only, it has no book collection of its own, but uses that of San Francisco Public Library where it is

housed. BARC serves other library systems, not individual libraries. At present it serves three of the systems in Santa Clara County: the Camino Real Library System, the Santa Clara Valley Library System, and CIN in addition to several other systems in the Bay Area.

The Mountain-Valley Information Center located in Sacramento joined the Sacramento City-County Library System with the Mother Lode Library System.⁴ "The overall goal ... was to form one large network to answer reference questions and locate books that could not be found in a particular member library." Eventually plans call for a total library network of all types of libraries, but the reference network has been established as the first priority. The main Mountain-Valley Center is in Sacramento with a smaller center in Auburn.

There are several other networks in California. Some of these are: the Southern California Answering Network (SCAN), the Black Gold Information Center (BLIC), the Total Information Exchange (TIE), the Information Center for Southern California Libraries (INFO), and the North Bay Co-operative Library System. One of the newest in California is CIN.

The Cooperative Information Network (CIN) was funded July 1, 1972, under the Library Services and Construction Act to "provide a major advance in the availability of information to persons, organization, business firms and governmental units in the county."⁵ This was the result of a survey conducted by the Library Directors of Santa Clara County which found that "local needs were not being met" by the few present systems within the county.⁶ Various ways of meeting these needs were discussed. Some of them are: a communication system, inter-library use, bibliographic control, resource development, shared technical services and several other projects such as a union catalog. The Library Directors

realized that the ideal is for complete cooperation in all areas of library service, but this is impossible at the present time. - The most pressing need, and the most feasible, involved a communication network.⁷

Therefore, the present CIN covers only information and reference referral services. It is hoped that the relationships formed informally in other areas at present may be strengthened in the future.

CIN is composed of 83 libraries of six different types. It is governed by a seven member board of directors composed of the County Librarian as an ex officio member and six elected members, one from each of the six types of libraries; public, school, commercial organization, junior college, university and non-commercial special. This board directs the activities of the network with the help of a part time coordinator.

The main expense involved in CIN so far has been the installation of 7 TWX machines in various question referral centers within the county. This augments the 5 existing TWX machine locations thus providing 12 nodes within the county each with two-way communication by TWX. TWX, for those not familiar with it, is a teletype system where messages are typed on a keyboard then sent over telephonelines to another TWX terminal. TWX (pronounced twix) has several advantages: it provides a written request which is much more accurate than verbal requests especially in titles and names, it can receive messages while unattended in the evening and at rush periods, it is relatively inexpensive for sending messages, and it is fast, transmitting at about 200 words per minute.

A chart showing possible channels for routing requests is appended at the end of this paper.⁸ A reference question initiated at a school for example, would probably be routed through Santa Clara Unified School District. They have a TWX machine and serve as the switching center for

school libraries in the county. The staff there decides which library in the system would best be able to answer the question and sends them a message by TWX. The goal is to provide an answer within 24 hours, if at all possible. With the multitude of different libraries and special collections in CIN, many questions are answered from within CIN's membership. If an answer can't be found within CIN, the question is referred to either BARC or the State Library. CIN isn't limited to these two systems as final resources although that usually is the route that requests travel. With TWX a library can send messages across the country or even overseas.

One of CIN's problems is that several library systems overlap in the same county. Santa Clara County has SBARN, the Camino Real Library System, Santa Clara Valley Library System, and now CIN. One library can be a member of several networks thus causing some confusion both in the routing of requests and in keeping statistics. SBARN stands for the South Bay Area Reference Network established in 1971 as a service to all residents of the area. The Camino Real Library System is composed of three public libraries in the County and the Santa Clara Valley Library System has two public library members.

With all of these networks and BARC available to them, why did the libraries of Santa Clara County create a new one? What has CIN got that these others don't have? CIN is unique in that it includes college, commercial, special and school libraries in its membership in addition to public libraries. Thus CIN has access to a much broader base of information than all of the other county networks combined. This is CIN's strength and also its greatest weakness.

It is easier for two or three libraries of the same type to cooperate for they have the same type of funding and services, but when you

have over 80 different libraries with varied types of funding and different concepts of library service you are bound to have problems. An example would be the Business Library at Stanford University. They are not a part of CIN though all of Stanford's other libraries are. This is because the business library charges its patrons for its services and to provide the same service free through CIN would cause them a loss of funds. Many special libraries in CIN are in a similar position. Most of them charge for photocopy services and some do not allow direct access to members of CIN. Several of the libraries even charge for searches done. Because of their situation they must do this, yet it is one area which needs to be worked on if CIN is to succeed.

Libraries are moving faster and faster toward a total library network. Each new attempt brings us closer to total information services for all people through all types of libraries. The trend seems to be for information and reference services to be implemented first and followed by closer forms of cooperation.

NOTES

1. Becker, Joseph and Olsen, Wallace C., "Information Networks", in Cuadra, Carlos A., (Ed.), Annual Review of Information Science and Technology, Volume 3. Chicago, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968. p. 289.
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3. Ramirez, William L., "San Francisco's BARC," News Notes of California Libraries, LXV (Summer 1970) p. 535-538.
4. Perkins, Dale and Short, Virginia, "The Mountain-Valley Information Center," News Notes of California Libraries, LXV (Summer 1970) p. 529-31.
5. Manual of the Cooperative Information Network: a Program of the Library Cooperative of Santa Clara County, 1972, p. A20.
6. Ibid., p. A.10.
7. Ibid., p. L.
8. Ibid., p.C.10.

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C. ROUTING OF REQUESTS

SOME OF THE POSSIBLE CHANNELS OF THE COOPERATIVE INFORMATION NETWORK

